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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/15/2017
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KPAL](#) [KISL](#) [KWBG](#) [BA](#) [IS](#) [REGION](#)
SUBJECT: BAHRAIN: PREMATURE ENGAGEMENT WITH PALESTINIAN
NATIONAL UNITY GOVERNMENT

REF: STATE 17726

CLASSIFIED BY: DCM SUSAN L. ZIADEH FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (C) THE DCM DELIVERED REFTEL DEMARCHE FEBRUARY 14 REGARDING PREMATURE ENGAGEMENT WITH THE PALESTINIAN NATIONAL UNITY GOVERNMENT TO MFA ASSISTANT UNDERSECRETARY FOR COORDINATION AND FOLLOW UP SHAIKH ABDUL AZIZ BIN MUBARAK AL KHALIFA. AFTER LISTENING CAREFULLY TO THE POINTS, SHAIKH ABDUL AZIZ SAID THAT HE WAS NOT AWARE OF ANY REQUESTS BY PALESTINIAN OFFICIALS TO VISIT OR MEET, BUT CAUTIONED THAT THE GOB WOULD NOT BE INCLINED TO AVOID MEETING WITH PALESTINIANS UNTIL THEY HAD AGREED TO THE QUARTETS PRINCIPLES. HE SAID THAT THERE ARE TIMES WHEN IT IS APPROPRIATE "TO MEET FACE-TO-FACE BEHIND CLOSED DOORS AND HAVE A HEART-TO-HEART TALK WITH YOUR FRIEND."

¶2. (C) SHAIKH ABDUL AZIZ STRESSED THAT THE GOB AGREES WITH THE QUARTET'S THREE PRINCIPLES AND, SHOULD A MEETING TAKE PLACE, WILL INSIST THAT THE PALESTINIANS ALSO AGREE TO THEM. THE PALESTINIANS "WON'T GET ANYWHERE UNLESS THEY AGREE TO THE PRINCIPLES." IN ADDITION, HE SAID THAT MEETINGS GIVE THE GOB AN OPPORTUNITY TO RELAY PERSONALLY TO THE PALESTINIANS THAT GOODWILL EXISTS ON THE ISRAELI SIDE AND TO ENCOURAGE THEM TO MOVE FORWARD IN GOOD FAITH. SHAIKH ABDUL AZIZ SAID IT WOULD NOT BE WISE FOR BAHRAIN TO CLOSE THE DOOR, AND EVEN THOUGH THE GOB WILL NOT INVITE THE PALESTINIANS TO VISIT, SENIOR GOB OFFICIALS COULD CONCEIVABLY MEET WITH THEIR PALESTINIAN COUNTERPARTS AS THEIR PATHS CROSS.

¶3. (C) SHAIKH ABDUL AZIZ ALSO ENCOURAGED THE USG TO "HELP ISRAEL MAKE THE RIGHT DECISIONS" TO IMPROVE THE PALESTINIANS ABILITY TO SATISFY THEIR MOST BASIC NEEDS. VISITING NEA/ARP DIRECTOR MISENHEIMER INQUIRED ABOUT THE GOB'S WILLINGNESS TO SEND THIS MESSAGE DIRECTLY TO THE ISRAELIS, COMMENTING THAT BAHRAIN HAS CREDIBILITY WITH ISRAEL AND CAN USE ITS INFLUENCE. SHAIKH ABDUL AZIZ ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE GOB HAS CHANNELS TO ISRAEL THAT IT CAN USE, BUT ARGUED THAT THE USG MUST PLAY THE MOST CRITICAL ROLE IN THIS REGARD. MISENHEIMER NOTED THAT NEA A/S WELCH WOULD BE SPENDING INCREASING TIME ON THE PEACE PROCESS. SHAIKH ABDUL AZIZ WELCOMED THIS NEWS, SAYING THAT U.S. FOCUS ON THE PEACE PROCESS WAS OF UTMOST IMPORTANCE.

¶4. (C) SHAIKH ABDUL AZIZ COMMENTED THAT THE SECTION OF THE JOINT STATEMENT ON PALESTINIAN ISSUES FROM THE RECENT GCC PLUS TWO MEETING IN KUWAIT HAD BEEN VERY WELL RECEIVED. IT SHOWED SINCERITY IN ADDRESSING PALESTINIAN CONCERNS AND MADE A DIFFERENCE IN EFFORTS TO IMPROVE THE UNITED STATES' IMAGE IN THE REGION. HE SAID THAT INCREASED U.S. ACTIVITY ON THE PEACE PROCESS WOULD SWAY PUBLIC OPINION IN A POSITIVE DIRECTION.

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